

## C. PhD Physics and Astronomy, 2010

### UCL Faculty:

■ Mathematical & Physical Sciences

### Current role:

■ Postdoctoral Research Assistant

### Previous role:

■ Postdoctoral Research Associate

### Sector:

■ Higher Education

C. is a Postdoctoral Research Assistant with NASA, working on behalf of an American University. Prior to this, C. was a Postdoctoral Research Associate at UCL's Department of Physics and Astronomy based at OpTIC Glyndwr in North Wales for a little over a year and a half.

C. has been motivated by pursuing positions that fulfil her research interests in physics and astronomy, and that offer opportunities for travel. Her PhD expertise, gained through researching active x-ray optics for the next generation of x-ray space telescopes is an essential aspect of her ability to work in the field and supports her career advancement. Her PhD research is also closely related to her current work, and is where she first developed transferable skills in collaborative working, analysis of complex information, technical problem solving and laboratory skills.

After completing her PhD, C. faced the challenge of competition for research posts and a lack of published research. C. was able to secure positions through searching for advertisements on job websites and talking to personal contacts she made throughout the course of her study and career.

C. enrolled in several courses offered through the UCL Graduate School, including health and safety in the workplace, laser safety and LaTeX, which is a document mark up and preparation system. C. notes that her training in LaTeX has been very beneficial for writing documents and is a tool she still uses today.

For those PhD students seeking employment in the academic field, C. advises that, 'networking and contacts are often the best method to obtain a research post.' She tells us that in the two instances she sought research opportunities, 'I knew my employers from either conferences or through the department.'

C. feels that it is important to choose a subject and supervisor carefully, adding, '*The type of guidance you require during your PhD will be different to that which you needed during your undergraduate projects and you should bear this in mind when choosing a supervisor / project*'

C. believes that PhD students should also 'expect to work independently, grit your teeth and finish the thesis.' She adds that the thesis 'doesn't have to be word perfect; you could spend years making it a work of art.'

**Tags:**

■ Mathematical & Physical Sciences, Researcher, Higher Education, Academic